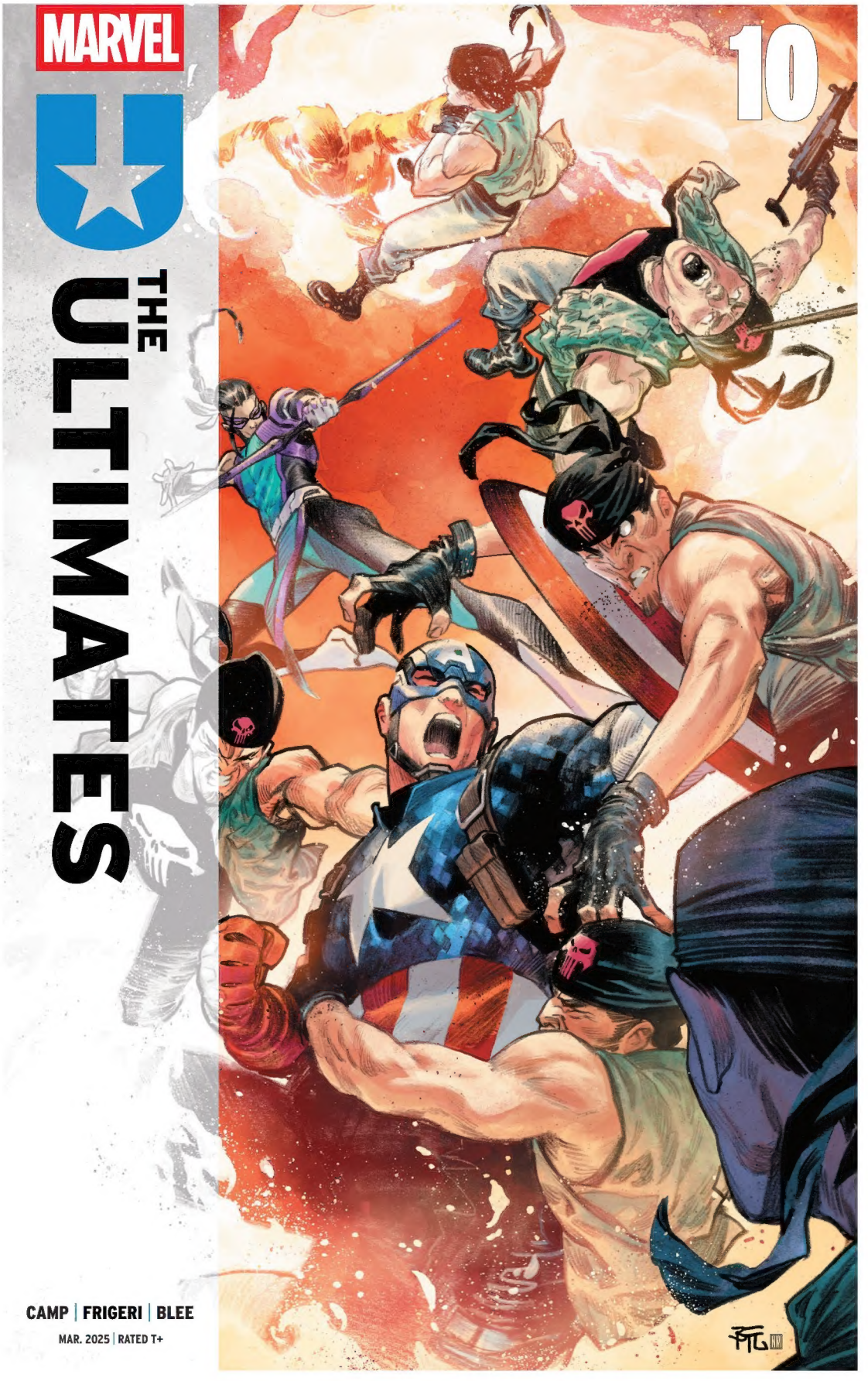
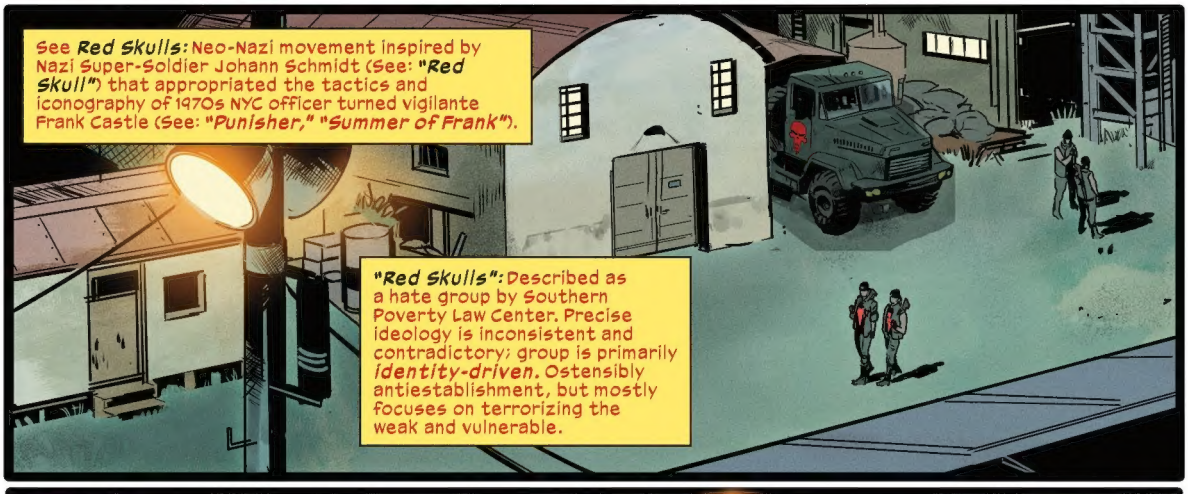

MARVEL
THE ULTIMATES
10
CAMP | FRIGERI | BLEE
MAR. 2025 | RATED T+

Accessing...
45.04.30.198.hrt...
Acht--!
Acheeeaaurgh!
Hrrgghhhhh--
"I thought Hitler killed himself?"

That was just the cover story. The Soviets were threatening a superhuman arms race and screaming about "illegal deployment overseas"...
Back then, we had this thing called politics.
So...how'd it feel? I mean...killing Hitler...
How did it feel...?
My brain isn't the world's oldest computer, but it's close. In the old days, I had to manually erase memories so it wouldn't slow down and seize up under the weight of all that history.
I gave up my medal of honor and the memory of getting that medal of honor. I gave up good friends, good years, and most memories of my brilliant father, Doctor Horton.
For a while, I played the piano, but even that had to go.
But that memory...that memory I keep in full color and high definition. I go back to it again and again.
It keeps me warm.
All right, enough reminiscing about the good old days of killing Nazis...

Accessing...UltNet...
Identifying...Castletown:
Militarized civilian stronghold of secessionist group self-designated: Red Skulls. One of twenty-three such militia towns across the North American Union.
...we've got to go kill some Nazis right now.


See Red Skulls: Neo-Nazi movement inspired by Nazi Super-Soldier Johann Schmidt (See: "Red Skull") that appropriated the tactics and iconography of 1970s NYC officer turned vigilante Frank Castle (See: "Punisher," "Summer of Frank").
"Red Skulls": Described as a hate group by Southern Poverty Law Center. Precise ideology is inconsistent and contradictory; group is primarily identity-driven. Ostensibly antiestablishment, but mostly focuses on terrorizing the weak and vulnerable.

Castletown is the permanent home to approximately 1,500 men, women and children, as well as the current Grand Skull, leader of the national Red Skull movement.

Wow. The internet really is amazing.
Eh. It has its downsides.
Let's go.

What's going on here?
Tony? You're supposed to be in surgery.
You should be resting.
It's...it's not too bad as long as I h-h--ahh!--have something to focus on.
I am.
Without... without anesthesia?
ZZRRTT
It's--hurk!--fine. The Immortus Engine is keeping me stable.
So what are you doing out there, Steve?
I don't have time to get you up to speed. You can follow along the live feeds if you want, but I'm in command here.
Accessing...25.03.05.842.hrt
Jim Hammond Real-Time Mission Report
Tone: Analytical/Direct
--ruled out a frontal assault for the same reason that Stane and Stark never stormed the Castles...

...for the same reason the Council won't touch them:
They brought their kids.
The Ultimates are not baby killers, whatever they say about us on the news. We can't take the risk.
So this is a stealth mission.
Huh?
Wh-what?
Oh ▬!
(Kids.)

Hey, you hear that?
Giant-Man and Wasp are perfect for this sort of operation. On paper.
Hear what?
Pym Particles give them both the ability to shrink as well as grow.
Wasp is a natural. Smart but not neurotic, confident but not cocky.
It's like she's been at this for years.
Like...like a tiny voice saying, "You can do this, Hank."
Who's Ha--akk--!
But her partner, Giant-Man, is another story.
Geoff, man, the voice... I--I think it's throwing up in my ear!
He's got a big heart, but it's just not in this kind of work.
Hank is always second-guessing himself. Hesitating when he shouldn't.
I-is this the right spot? Dang perspective shift... I'm all disoriented...
BANG BANG BANG
I'm all right, I'm all right...
It'll get him killed one day. Probably soon.

Hawkeye never hesitates.
The trick is making sure they're pointed in the right direction.
Their quiver fabricates noise-canceling knockout arrows.
The men don't even whisper as they fall.
The Red Skulls have nothing to do with the Council or the Maker. They're not a priority.
I've received information that connects this organization to H.A.N.D.
And Nazis are always a priority.
It's all one fight, Tony.
It's actually thousands of them, Charli.

Steve doesn't argue. He *never* argues.
Answer me, Cap!
Whenever possible, Captain America lets his *actions* answer *for* him.
Get some *rest*, Tony.
I stick to a smolder, spewing suppressive smoke as we approach our target.
Castle Alpha-One is up ahead.
Good. Lay it on *thick*, Jim.
Of course it's a priority, Tony.
If you'd seen what *we'd* seen, you'd know it was a priority.

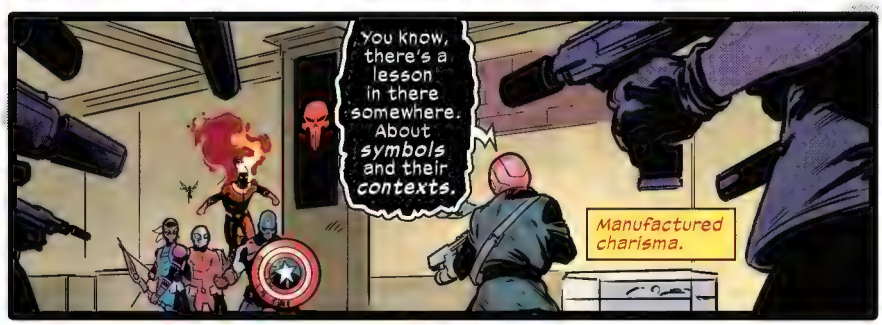
But even so, seeing is no longer believing.
What's--?
Fire...?
Reality is so easily doctored now. Nothing is what it seems.
Everything can mean anything. The truth must be verified by hand.
So here we are, fighting Nazis with laser guns.
It strikes my upgraded sense of humor as funny, but I don't laugh.
Accessing... 42.06.21.298.hrt
Some things never change...

According to what I found, it should be--
SUB-MARINER
The gang's all here! It's an Invaders reunion!

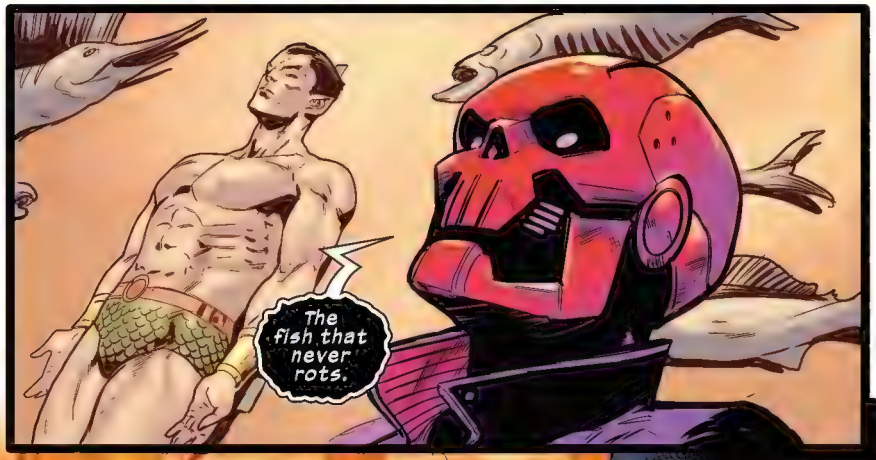
But we're well prepared for invaders.
CHH-CHK
CHH-CHK
CHH-CHK
Accessing...UltNet...
Grand Skull: At least five different men have held the position of Grand Skull. Four died violently. The civilian identity of the current Grand Skull is unknown to the public, and perhaps even the larger organization itself.
It's him. It's really--
"...though I'm afraid he's lost his infamous vigor."
King Namor, the Sub-Mariner.
Yes, it's really him...
You weren't supposed to find out about him. I wasn't ready to see you yet.
Voice Recognition: ERROR
Facial Recognition: ERROR
Biometric Scan Results: Estimated Age: 73. Estimated Height: 5'8".
Identity: Inconclusive.
So...how's tricks, Cap?
Get him down from there. NOW.

How did you--? Did you kill--?
Of course not.
"The certificate of authenticity says his death was a political matter. An underwater coup of some kind.
"The Mad King was overthrown according to Atlantean custom and executed according to Atlantean law. As were his many wives, allies and heirs.
"But the body became a holy site--religions sprung up around it like seaweed.
"Oppressed Atlanteans making pilgrimages and problems.
"The new regime down there didn't like it, so they exiled their former king after they killed him, which has to be some kind of first.
"It doesn't decay, see? They say...the worshippers say it isn't just his super-dense tissue. They claim the ocean's micro-organisms refuse to eat the body.
"That, even dead, every living thing down there recognizes its rightful king."

The things people hold on to, eh?
It wasn't my idea to mount him, by the way. That was the last guy. A real collector--very into big game.
But it turns out the corpse is a killer recruitment tool. The boys can't get enough of it--they practically piss themselves.
The voice isn't just distorted--it's enhanced. Braided with hypnotic suggestions at the frequency of human thought.


You know, there's a lesson in there somewhere. About symbols and their contexts.
Manufactured charisma.

Down there, he's a miracle. Up here, he's a joke.


The fish that never rots.

I give the signal. I am the signal.
FWOOOSH
Ultimates... this is what we trained for! Clear the room!

We move precisely, calmly, *naturally.* Reinforcing strengths, compensating for weaknesses.
We move like a *finely tuned machine.*
And I feel-- It feels like--
Room is clear!
Somebody get him *down* from there!

I'm going to break open your skull. Maybe more than one.
Now wait. Wait a minute.
You know, you could learn a lot from us. How we operate.
I mean, we both preach violent revolution against the world government, but we've been at it a lot longer than you have.
Accessing...UltNet... Headline: Red Skull militia massacres caravan of Inhuman refugees on southern border.
You're racists, thugs and murderers. We're nothing like you.
What do you give them?
Well, you're right about that. We've got more money, better branding and a much larger membership.
We give them an enemy. A symbol. We give them something to believe in and something to die for.
Here's one of our "true believers" now! His name is John Walker.
John's been a devoted follower of Red Skull content for years, ever since he was a boy. Sixteen months ago, he came to me with a metal box, a message from Tony Stark and a vial of Super-Soldier Serum, asking me what to do.
You know what I said?

I said, "Kick their [redacted] heads in, John!"
Rgghhhh!!!
FWOOOOSH
Aiiieeeee!!!
Jesus, Jim.
Hmpph.

ZZTT
You are not the Red Skull! I killed Johann Schmidt over 75 years ago!
Take that thing off and give up this charade! You're done!
CRZZZRT
Guh!!!
This is Tony Stark to Grand Skull. I am transmitting directly to your... uh, skull.
In the last twenty minutes, I've scrubbed all known Red Skull content from the internet, crashed all related platforms, and drained all your secret bank accounts. Yes, even that one.
I needed something to focus on.
Good gravy, it looks like you've got me! Captain America's done it again!
CLICK
But I'm like you now, Cap. More than a man--I'm a symbol.
And symbols don't die. They just come back different.
TAP TAP TAP
It was good to see you, Steve.

The funeral was small, for a *king*.
Of those present, only Steve and I had really known him.
Not much was said, but what was said was true.
He fought like hell and he was our brother, as much as any man in Arlington.
But the ocean was his only country. That's where he belongs.
So now we give the sea back her *king*.
May he inspire many a revolution, even in death.

Accessing...
Jim Hammond Private Thought Log
Tone: Poetic/Reflective

I am thinking: About death. Mainly my own.

I am standing: In the antiseptic darkness of the Triskelion satellite, hours after Namor's funeral, trying to remember how I "died."

I remember: One minute, I am walking down Avenue A in the bright light of 1948. Next, I am waking up in a warehouse in 2024. In between there's nothing and a whole new world.

I am looking: Out a window, 1,200 miles above the earth. It's night in North America, and on its surface, a million pricks of manmade light blink in the darkness, like signal fires.

I wonder (not for the first time): What happened to me in 1948? How did I get here? Who can I trust?

I feel: Disturbed. The details of my death have been *manually deleted*. The Maker leaves us nothing, not even our own minds. All he leaves us are questions without answers.

I remember: It is 1939, and I am standing in a vacuum tube. Doctor Horton tries to speak to me through the glass, but the sound does not carry. I watch his mouth move silently for days, trying to understand. The first word I hear my creator speak is: "Behold!" I immediately burst into flame.

I realize: I have not slept since my rebirth. I no longer need to. In the warehouse, I slept for 76 years, 3 months, 12 days, 10 hours, 34 minutes and 17 seconds. I will never sleep again. Instead...

I explore: While others rest, make love or pretend to live their lives, I turn my mind into a narrow stream of electrons and swim through the sum total of human knowledge. At 98% the speed of light, I move between wires, servers, satellites.

I marvel: At what I find out there. Love letters and death threats, videos of kittens and executions. *The best and worst of people.*

I think: *The internet is mankind's shadow made of light.*

I bring up: The photos I found on the Red Skull social network. In the photos, obviously intoxicated young men hold Namor's corpse over their heads like a trophy.

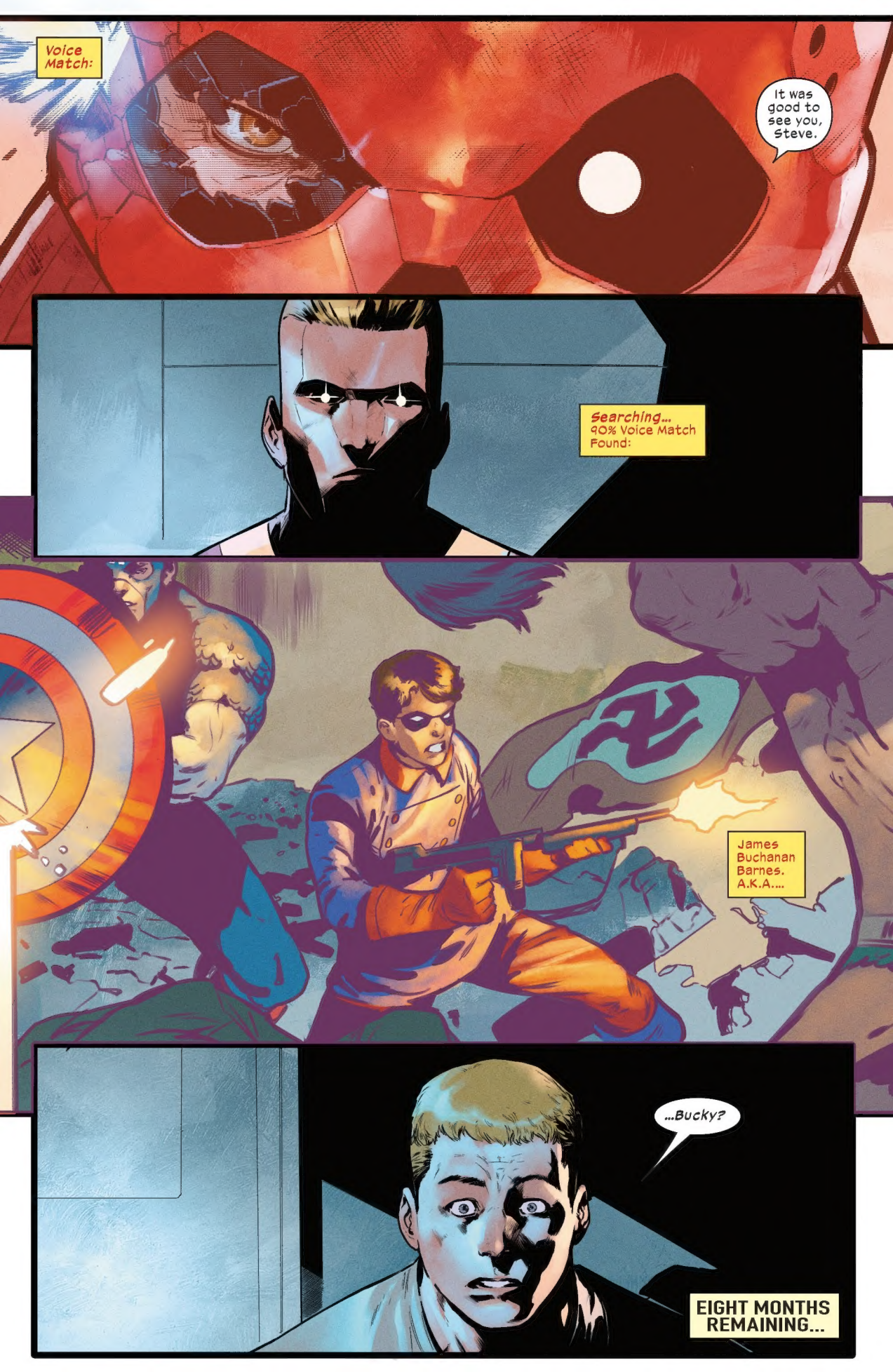
I cannot stop thinking about: What the Grand Skull said about symbols and their recurrence. In my nighttime explorations, I've collected dozens of newspaper clippings, blurry photographs, second- and thirdhand accounts from the 1950s, '60s and '70s. All containing claims of "a flying man on fire."

I ask myself (not for the first time): What does it all mean? Have there been others like me? Are they also locked in a warehouse somewhere, waiting to be rekindled? Is it some scam I don't understand? Or is it the world trying to light the fire of its own liberation?

I am on fire: With questions without answers.

End Private Thought Log

Accessing...25.03.06.931.hrt
Jim Hammond Real-Time Report
--Addendum--
Tone: Disquieted/Disturbed
Steve hasn't slept or spoken since the funeral. He just sits in his room with the light burning all night.
As a result of my cognitive upgrade, I have gotten much better at reading human emotional cues. I now recognize that Steve is deeply troubled.
As am I. But why?
It's not just Namor. It was something the Grand Skull said...not the mind-control distortion, but what it was hiding...
It was good to see you, Steve.
Something familiar.


Voice Match:
It was good to see you, Steve.
Searching...
90% Voice Match Found:
James Buchanan Barnes. A.K.A....
...Bucky?
EIGHT MONTHS REMAINING...

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